

# The Elementary ENGLISH REVIEW

VOL. VII

MAY 1930

No. 5

## The Language Approach to Reading

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THERE is plenty of evidence that educators lately have been much occupied in finding for each mental phenomenon some simple (comparatively simple, of course) external manifestation whose objective measurement easily made and recorded will be an index of the complicated activity it accompanies. Thus in the study of thinking, behaviorists have been primarily interested in sub-vocal laryngeal activity, and the clinical workers in the correction of such speech defects as stuttering have been interested in dominance as shown by right-or left-handedness. Largely to find the relationship between intelligence and physical growth but partly to find a measure easily gotten which would be an index of intelligence, correlations have been worked out between mental age and each of the following (to give only a few): stature, sitting height, weight, size of head, strength of right grip, strength of left grip, and vital capacity.

The mental phenomenon which we call reading has been attacked from the same physiological—if we may call it that—viewpoint and in much the same spirit. The exigencies of time and space forbid any chronicling of the study of the reading activity through the observing and the

reporting of eye-movements. This approach to the study of reading is well supported by Buswell<sup>1</sup> who states, "A satisfactory method of studying the growth of reading habits must rest upon the measurement, either directly or indirectly, of some aspect of the actual process of reading. Furthermore, this method must be objective in character, rather than dependent upon the subjective judgment of even a superior teacher. The method which most fully meets these requirements is that of photographing the eye-movements of a pupil during the process of reading. . . . When we see a person making an average of twenty fixations per line in reading we know that he is not grasping the meaning easily or rapidly. In like manner, when we observe a person making an average of four fixations per line we know that he is either reading superficially or has reached a mature stage of reading."

Gray<sup>2</sup> in his invaluable summary holds that it is now evident "that rhythmical progress of perceptions characterizes the

<sup>1</sup>Buswell, G. T. FUNDAMENTAL READING HABITS: A Study of Their Development. Supplementary Educational Monographs, No. 21, University of Chicago, 1922.

<sup>2</sup>Gray, W. S., SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIONS RELATING TO READING. Supplementary Educational Monographs, No. 28, University of Chicago, 1925.

good reader and is one of the desirable goals of reading instruction." And later, (p. 207) in the same work Gray lists "ineffective eye-movements" as one of the "causes of (reading) difficulty."

O'Brien<sup>3</sup> may be said to have placed the chief emphasis on eye-movements in his text on reading. He gives sixty pages out of a total of 273 to a direct treatment of eye phenomena and his discussion throughout is permeated with the importance in reading of proper eye mechanics.

The experimental work on this objective phase of the reading process has been done in a scholarly and most praiseworthy manner. The results obtained constitute extremely worth while findings.

To an impartial student, however, the various experiments based upon the photographing of eye-movements seem to show reading not as a problem in muscle twitches of the eye but rather as a complex of language activity and thought getting. The photographic records secured have served to confirm and sustain other experimental data obtained by various techniques that reading is a language problem, a problem of getting and assimilating meaning, that the task of learning to read is not that of acquiring proper eye manipulations but of learning the language.

Judd and Buswell<sup>4</sup> found that the number of fixation pauses in a line depends upon the kind or nature of the reading matter, upon the language difficulty of the reading matter, upon the reader's purpose or reason for reading, and upon the reader's mastery of reading.

Of course, it is realized that the above factors differ with individuals. One pupil as *A* might require fewer fixations for a line in an arithmetic text than for a line in a literature book, while for another pupil, *B*, the requirements might be quite reversed. *A* is a better reader of the language of

arithmetic or a better thinker in the terms of arithmetic than *B*, but *B* is a better reader of the language of literature. To become a better reader of arithmetic *B* needs not training in eye-movements but training in work-type reading, in the language of arithmetic, in thinking in the concepts of that science.

The same experimenters found that the factors such as language difficulty, type of language material, and the purpose of the reader controlled or regulated the time given to each fixation pause.

The causes for regressive movements of the eye in reading, while not so conclusive, also point to language or meaning factors. The reasons enumerated for eye-regressions are: (1) ineffective return sweeps of the eye from the end of one line to the beginning of the next, (2) attempts to clarify meaning, (3) difficulty in arriving at meaning, (4) lack of word knowledge, (5) adjustment to varying language content of varying types of reading material, and (6) changes in the purpose of reading. It will be noticed that all of these with the possible exception of the first are matters of language or thought mastery.

Many research workers have insisted and do insist that the correct approach to the study of reading is to treat it as a language or a thought-getting enterprise. The latter phrase is necessary to prevent us from confusing language activity with mere verbalism. Language rightly taught is a quest for meaning and words are conceived of as only means to that end.

Horn and McBroom<sup>5</sup> after an examination of life activities in which people read have divided the reading situations into two distinct types: "(1) situations involving *work* with books, and (2) situations involving *recreatory reading*." These are each broken up into two classes, oral and silent. For each of the four types of reading, there are given the situations in which they occur or are needed. The unit

<sup>3</sup>O'Brien, John Anthony, *SILENT READING*. Macmillan, 1921.

<sup>4</sup>Judd, C. H. and Buswell, G. T., *SILENT READING: A Study of the Various Types*. Supplementary Educational Monographs, No. 23, University of Chicago, 1922.

<sup>5</sup>Horn E. and McBroom, M., *A SURVEY OF THE COURSE OF STUDY IN READING*. College of Education Series, No. 3, State University of Iowa, 1924.

skills, knowledges, attitudes, and abilities required for success in each type of reading, and the methods of acquiring such skills are set forth in parallel columns. The need of "rhythmic and rapid eye-movements" is acknowledged for work-type reading but subordinated to one of the nine major skills, the "ability to comprehend quickly what is read," and the method of acquiring this ability is language or thought-getting exercises with flash cards. It is expressly stipulated that the flash cards shall have words, phrases, or sentences requiring meaningful responses through either language activity or gross bodily movement. The point of view is certainly away from verbalism but toward the recognition of reading as the process of getting facts (work-type) or joy (recreational) from the printed page. The analysis is minute and specific, but causes are not confused with results.

Gates<sup>6</sup> in his reports of investigations and his other writings (one of which is listed below) has taken the language approach to reading. His reading tests for grades three to eight are diagnostic but diagnostic in respect to language or thought-getting abilities:

Type A. Reading to Appreciate the General Significance of a Paragraph

Type B. Reading to Predict the Outcome of Given Events

Type C. Reading to Understand Precise Directions

Type D. Reading to Note Details.

Gates states (pp. 233-234), "Remedial work directed exclusively to correcting the eye-movements might be expected to be futile. The author, indeed found this to be true in certain cases subjected to such treatment and has failed to find in the work of others evidence of success resulting from the direct training of eye-movements. Improper eye-movements result . . . from many causes. . . If these causes are properly removed, it will be unnecessary to treat

the eye-movements specifically."

In listing the causes of slow reading or improper eye-movements Gates puts down the following:

1. Excessive articulation
2. Finger-following
3. Inability to utilize context clues
4. Special difficulties with thought units, punctuation, etc.
5. Small reading vocabulary
6. Deficiencies in methods of word perception and word study.

These (with perhaps some slight reservation as to the second) everyone would agree are language difficulties. It is easy to understand how Gates and others failed to eradicate the above defects through any isolated drill in eye manœuvres.

There is some additional experimental evidence, gathered for quite other purposes, which tends to show that ineffective eye-movements are merely results of language difficulties.

The fact that children in the lower grades usually do better or get more when reading matter is presented to them orally by the teacher than when it is given them to read may not by any means have its cause in the alleged problems of eye-movements, but rather in the primacy of language learning through the ear.

Russell,<sup>7</sup> in an attempt to compare the effectiveness of oral presentation by the teacher and silent reading by the pupils on three grade levels, five, seven, and nine, discovered the oral presentation superior on the fifth grade level, equal on the seventh, but inferior on the ninth when the same reading materials were used. The improvement of the visual method from grade five to nine must be one of language progress, for Gray has found that the eye-movements are well established in the first four grades. The following data taken and rearranged from his summary already quoted, show

(Continued on page 134)

<sup>6</sup>Gates, A. I., *THE IMPROVEMENT OF READING*, Macmillan, 1929.

<sup>7</sup>Russell, Ralph Douglas, *THE RELATIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF PRESENTING VERBAL MATERIAL VISUALLY AND ORALLY AS MEASURED BY THE AMOUNT OF RECALL*. Ph. D. Thesis, State University of Iowa, 1923.

# Creative Reading\*

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IN ONE of Hans Andersen's most charming and characteristic stories, "The Elder Tree Mother," a friendly old man responds to the demand for a story from the little boy who got wet feet with this observation,—“The real stories come of themselves. They knock at my face and say, ‘Here am I!’”

“Will there soon be a knock?” asked the little boy.

“Yes, if a story would come of itself; but that kind of thing is very grand; it only comes when one's in the humor—Look you, there's one in the teapot now.”

And the friendly old man and the little boy who got wet feet gazed with all their might at the homely teapot from which came forth the white, fresh flowers of the Elder Tree Mother whose real name is Remembrance.

In the conversation with which this lovely tale opens lies the heart of the matter we call creative reading. The significant moments in the appreciation of fine literature are those when one is living with the images of a poem or story. The clear, swift impressions that come when “one's in the humor” are stored forever in one's treasure house of remembrance. Experiences of this sort are far removed from those intervals in the classroom when one is asked to pick out the nice words or the pictures one likes best, or dullest of all, to speculate concerning what one would have done or have not done in a situation similar to that in which some character may be placed. No matter how adroitly teachers may succeed in coaxing from children

contributions of the sort suggested the process is one that has little to do with the development of feeling for aesthetic values.

Creative reading depends upon an understanding of the ways of the imagination in shaping its materials without which there can be no genuine appreciation of literature or any of the arts. It comes close to the familiar in everyday experience but always with a transforming touch that helps us to find the hidden beauty in life. And “that kind of thing is very grand.” Creative reading does not yield to the pressure of any forcing process, which reminds us how patiently we should wait for responses lest images grow blurred or remain incomplete in the making. The enjoyment of literature depends primarily upon that wealth of associations through which we garner what is worth remembering and through which we come to interpret what is new and strange. The teaching of literature in the elementary school means largely helping children to form beautiful associations with the fine things found in books and through their own varied creative efforts. That children find the way easily is clear enough from the eagerness with which they listen for the “knock” of authentic inspiration. They do not confuse the experience that is theirs when the door of imagination opens with mere talking about what has happened. In short, the approach to literature through creative reading is the way of the artist. If we are to get the full flavor of literature then our mode of reading it must

\*Paper read before the Elementary Section, National Council of Teachers of English, Kansas City, November 30, 1929.



take on in some measure the character of the process which has gone into its making. It is this full flavor which we are likely to miss altogether when we read too rapidly or too analytically, when we do not pause "to wonder and behold." The enjoyment of literature as a form of experience requires ample time for reflection, for the pursuit of alluring by-paths, for the play of memory with images.

An anecdote told by Hugh Walpole in one of his lectures illustrates perfectly the difference between reading for the sake of filling in odd moments and reading for the sake of living more completely. In the course of a railway journey in America the novelist amused himself by observing his fellow travelers. A woman across the aisle was reading a book. Mr. Walpole craned his neck and caught a glimpse of the title with excitement. She was reading one of his novels! He must watch her reactions closely. Shortly he noted with alarm how rapidly she turned the leaves of the book. Now and then she fluttered two or three of them with just the merest glance at their contents and skipped straight from the middle of a chapter to its end. And the while the creator of the book longed to exclaim, "You are missing a nice little bit there," or "I took great pains with what you have passed over at the foot of the page." At length the novelist ceased to watch this woman who held his book in her hands, for as he justly observed, "She wasn't reading me at all."

Unfortunately too many readers of all ages are in the case of this traveler. They mistake skimming and skipping through books for the experience of reading literature, and sometimes they cut themselves off even more completely from the realization of aesthetic experience by applying the useful topical methods of reading to the perusal of literary masterpieces.

If there is one thing upon which teachers of English seem to be in agreement it is that literature should be read for the sake of appreciation or for pleasure. But as

one observes the teaching of literature in many schools there seems to be great difference of opinion as to what constitutes appreciation, for methods vary from the greatest degree of individual freedom to close adherence to stereotyped routines. In the conventional appreciation lesson of other days there was always much conscientious mention of joy, but the realization of the emotion itself tended to be pallid and thin to the point of attenuation. It is a far cry from this formal sort of thing to the idea of teachers and pupils sharing in many types of experience through the medium of literature,—merry, whimsical, heroic, adventurous, and always satisfying. Approaches to literature in this freer spirit are based upon simple recognition of the fact that children are always whole-hearted in the enterprises that appeal to them. Thus creative reading has many modes, for it has to do with many forms of human experience: it may be the oral interpretation of the gifted reader whose delicate observance of cadence, rhythm, and pause gives life to the printed page; it be the quiet talk about a favorite book with sympathetic friends; it may be one's purely personal enjoyment of something discovered in the course of much browsing. Whatever the mode creative reading may assume, the experience is always individual.

Again teachers of English are in agreement, for this is precisely the sort of thing we hope to achieve in our classrooms. But the question that is pertinent for us looms large. How may this desirable thing be accomplished in public schools with oversized classes and limited equipment? I do not propose to deal with all the implications of this question. Rather I shall try to tell you about some of the most important developments in a large public school where a carefully organized experimental study in the teaching of literature is now in progress.

Three years ago a group of teachers in Detroit set out to see how fully it might be possible to realize in the classroom teach-

ing of literature something of the zest, fun and color that often accompanies individual reading. When the McKerrow school was added to the group of schools connected with the training department of Detroit Teachers College in 1927, this experimental study began. Officially our intention reads: "To make a course of study in English for the elementary school based upon children's interests." The supervision of this work was delegated to the writer. The set-up is a platoon school with two literature rooms with a teacher assigned to each room. The grades included in the experiment are A1 through A6. In this school the B1 is non-platoon. The total enrollment in the school for the current year is 1,457 and the membership of each section averages 42. There is no practice teaching done in any of the special rooms in this training school, although the literature rooms are open at all times to student teachers for individual observations. We are not required to follow any prescribed course of study. So far as the general procedure in the elementary schools of Detroit is concerned, we give the children the same initial and final tests in English that are given in other schools. For the teachers the city tests serve as a moderately useful check. Here the temptation to a digression is very great. Suffice to say that the pupils make a very respectable showing on the city tests. An economical use of time allotment makes it necessary to confine attention for the present to discussion of the types of approaches that have encouraged creative reading, and to some of the outcomes that represent the reactions of the children.

In the beginning we were given a perfectly free hand, though for a time we had little else save the majority of the classic difficulties,—no books, no materials for creative work, no money for curtains, pictures, or any of the things which help to make an interesting environment. The teachers were unusually intelligent and enthusiastic, but with little actual teaching

experience. It may be explained that the choice of teachers with limited experience was deliberate. We took care, however, to choose two young women possessed of the gift of companionship with children and with a first-hand acquaintance with children's literature. Their success has more than justified faith in youthful promise. In addition the school was entirely new, so that we had to meet the problems of adjustment common to a new organization.

Today there are books; there is a supply of materials for creative work; there are curtains, book-shelves, low tables for exhibits, some really good pictures and pottery, small puppet theatres and colorful bulletin boards. Many of most interesting decorative details represent the work and suggestions of the children, for they regard the rooms in a very special sense as their own. In these days of strong visual appeal on every hand rooms designed for the teaching of literature must manage to look the part. The floor space is kept as clear as crowded conditions will permit, so that children may enjoy physical freedom in their creative work. The teachers' desks are the least conspicuous pieces of furniture in the rooms. For the children there are movable desks. We should much prefer tables and chairs for them, but it is necessary to use the standard equipment provided.

When this experimental study began the teachers responsible had one very definite conviction, namely that older people, teachers and parents alike, usually underestimate the abilities of children in the matter of self-expression and at the same time assume that the experiences of children have been much wider than they are. In consequence there is too little scope for natural activities in the classroom and far too much stress placed upon interpretation through past experience. Actual practice shows that this assumption leads to dependence upon a vague sort of vicarious experience. Thus we come upon a teacher

who is telling her pupils most pleasantly about the trips she has taken, the things she has seen in museums and shops, sometimes even about the music she has heard. This sort of thing often goes on in a room in which there is not a single object or a bit of color that may suggest the background about which the teacher is talking. There may be some pictures, especially those collected from advertising pages and the Sunday supplements to furnish substitutes for experiences that are remote from children. All this second-hand recounting bears the label stimulation. When it is applied to so delicate and individual a thing as the enjoyment and interpretation of literature one gets nowhere.

From the beginning we have faced frankly the fact that city children are likely to have had few opportunities for first hand contact with things, with nature, or even with the unique features of the city in which they live. We are always assuming that children are of course acquainted with their own communities but unfortunately it is not as true as it might be. It follows then that we must try to bring as much reality as possible into the school-room and use such experiences as children have had as a point of departure. Since appreciation of literature depends so largely upon a wealth of associations the selection of material in the beginning must be determined by what is familiar to the children.

At this stage it may be useful to tell in some detail how we began with our youngest group. First of all we wished to establish a friendly atmosphere in which the children would feel quite at home. When they came into the room for the first time they found their desks arranged in a semi-circle around a low table with a pretty cover. On the table was a stuffed black and yellow cat, a little blue bowl with a card marked "Kitty's bowl," and two other cards, "Kitty's picture" and "Kitty likes to play." Then there were two books each open at particular pages. One of these was the *HERE AND NOW STORY BOOK*,

by Lucy Sprague Mitchell, open at the page on which appear some simple verses, "My Kitty," and the other book was *NOW WE ARE SIX*, by A. M. Milne, open at the page containing "Pinkle Purr." The sight of the familiar objects inspired the liveliest kind of talk about "my cat," "the cat I saw," and the neighbor's cats. The exploits recounted were both amazing and commonplace. At first the children evinced no particular interest in the books, for they were completely absorbed in talking about cats and in drawing cats to concern themselves with literary felines. Furthermore these first-grade children had not yet learned to read, so that their interest in books other than picture books was naturally rather gradual in its development. But the teacher did not attempt to force matters by saying, "Here is a book about cats," or "I know a story about a cat." To use familiar experience as a basis for aesthetic appreciation is quite a different matter from using it as a device for trapping children into listening to something we may wish to give them. Presently a little boy asked the question we hoped to hear, "Are the books about cats?" The teacher answered, "Partly. Would you like to listen to the part about cats?" Of course he wanted nothing else so much and his interest made the other children in the group eager for the same thing. "My Kitty" was a delightful epitome of their own experiences and "Pinkle Purr" amused them hugely. For several days they listened to these verses over and over again. Usually their request for reading would be phrased in this fashion: "Please read where it says—," and then the repetition of several lines would follow, and shortly they were joining in the reading chorus fashion. For them the charm of these very simple verses was wholly in the pattern. At this stage there were no requests for a story. Later the teacher found an appropriate moment to tell them that in the book which contained "My Kitty" there was a story about a cat named Spot. This was enough. The



children listened with rapt attention to "How Spot Found a Home" and later drew many pictures of this forlorn cat. Thus may literature become a living thing for children and familiar experience serve to widen vistas.

From cats we progressed to dogs and the pets in turn made an easy transition to toys. It was while dogs claimed attention that the children made one of their most fruitful discoveries. The teacher told them the old repetitive tale, "How Jack Went to Seek His Fortune." They listened to it several times but with little or no comment. Their eagerness to hear it again was the one real proof of interest. Then they announced one day: "We have a surprise." Thereupon they played the story continuously, movie-fashion, which is the child's own way of building a play. Up to this time we had taken care not to force the suggestion that stories might be played. They discovered this form of activity for themselves. In the matter of choosing stories for play-making they used the nicest discrimination, for stories of the experience type such as those in the *HERE AND NOW STORY BOOK* were never chosen. Over and over again their selection has shown that they know what it is that makes a story dramatic. Here we have observed that the child's own word for all forms of dramatic play is simply play. Even in the upper elementary grades children never use the words "dramatic" and "dramatization" since they are clearly adult, not to say wholly pedagogical, in their connotation.

For much the same reason we have never used the word "memorize" in connection with the reading of poetry. We have never suggested in any grade that it is desirable to memorize poems, yet in all the classes the children have appropriated an astonishing amount of verse which they enjoy repeating. They call this type of experience "saying poems," and for them it has the zest and spirit of a good game. When by chance there is a little time to fill the request from the children is almost invari-

ably, "Let's say poems," or "Read us a poem." They have heard an abundance of the choicest poetry read and repeated by the teachers. In the planning of all units we always group poems and stories together in such a way as to suggest associations and to break down the old idea of a sharp distinction between prose and verse. In a recent survey of the selections that have been read aloud in these classes over a period of two years it appeared that the proportion of verse to prose has been about two-thirds of verse to one-third of prose. Here it is well to keep in mind that the children, particularly those in the upper elementary grades, are doing much free reading of their own in which stories of many types are well represented, so that their literary experience is rather well balanced. With the younger children we have observed that their interest in pattern is just as keen as their interest in action, sometimes even stronger. This is a form of interest that is often starved because many older people have an obsession that a young person wants narrative above all else.

This experiment has included considerable study of the modes of response made by children and the relation of time to response. This phase of the work has included trying various units and selections with different grades in order to find, if possible, at what stage the interest in particular literary selections seems to be strongest. Here is an illustration of a unit which was tried simultaneously in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades. Each class came in and found on a little table a collection of small things, a tiny doll, a skipping rope, a doll's tea-set, marbles, a pen-knife, and some of the articles that are often stored in boys' pockets. In the center of this collection appeared a copy of *A CHILD'S DAY*, by Walter de la Mare, open at a page which revealed that the book has to do with the adventures of Elizabeth Ann. The presence of familiar things brought a perfectly unforced request for



the book. The teacher read a goodly portion of *A CHILD'S DAY* while children listened without comment, a reaction which was identical with each group. She was uncertain as to the advisability of continuing the reading but the next day the children begged, "Go on with Elizabeth Ann." Pleased and puzzled she complied and this sort of thing kept up until the reading of the book was completed. Still no comment despite the close attention given to the reading. The teacher took care to force no questions upon the children and avoided much explanation. Other activities developed with the various groups and we heard no more about *A CHILD'S DAY*. At this stage we were inclined to think that choice of the selection in itself was a blunder. Then shortly before Christmas the 6B group brought in a proposition of their own: to make a picture book for the kindergarten because a shortage of picture books in the kindergarten had been reported. In reply to the question, "What kind of a picture book have you in mind?" they came forth with a perfectly clear scheme. They wanted to make a book like Elizabeth Ann's particularly suited to the needs and tastes of their own younger brothers and sisters. In fact a good deal of the work was under way when they made their proposition. They wrote their own verses, collected their own pictures and throughout depended upon their own efforts with a single exception. No one in the group succeeded in making what was called a bed-time poem that the members of the group considered suitable. Therefore they compromised upon including Stevenson's "Bed in Summer" because it expressed what they wanted in the book. At least eight weeks intervened between the reading of the poem and the making of the picture book which was their own interpretation of a child's day. Now and then we get quaint and unexpected comments concerning *A CHILD'S DAY* from members of the other group, although it has been well over a year since the book was first read to

them. Again "The Tinder Box" by Hans Andersen was read to a 4B class and was enjoyed with little comment, simply as a good story. Later when the same group was in 4A they astonished everyone by announcing that they were about to produce a play upon which they had been working. The play proved to be a lively and spirited interpretation of "The Tinder Box." These experiences have taught us one of the most important lessons we have learned in the course of this experiment in making a course of study in elementary English,—the necessity of giving children time in which to live with their own reactions. Some of the impressions and experiences which have the greatest meaning and interest for them are not talked about even with the most sympathetic grown-ups. Since real dislike or distaste is usually positively expressed there is little likelihood of mistaking the sensitivity of children for indifference.

The findings and discoveries made with our more difficult groups are probably even of greater interest than are those made with children who enjoy literature with little or no urging. We have had one section composed chiefly of boys that has furnished problems in abundance for every teacher in the school. These youngsters resisted our best efforts in all directions and took no interest in creative work unless it had to do with aeroplanes or radio. Quite unexpectedly one day they announced that they wanted to give a play, provided it could be presented according to their own plan. Since it was the first evidence of interest in a group activity they were urged to go ahead with their own ideas. We tried not to ask too many questions. The first performance was given at a club meeting. And the play? It displayed Buffalo Bill in his most lurid and noisy phases. The dialogue was realistic to the degree of being startling. Clearly the subject-matter for this amazing concoction had not been gathered from any of the material on our book-shelves. Although it was not

easy to say little, we avoided making any negative comments and depended for the needed suggestions upon the children in the audience. In no uncertain terms the spectators recommended numerous changes, which the performers took with a very good grace. A good many of the suggestions took this form: "If you would read so and so, you would find cowboys did this so and so —."

As a result of this somewhat violent entry into the world of drama the boys began to show some interest in the books on the shelves. Very shortly they discovered *THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER*, and curiously enough it was Mark Twain's hero who worked a transformation in their lives. Soon the boys began making what they called a Tom Sawyer play, an activity which has been running now for over a year. A goodly portion of the text of the play was written during the summer vacation and proudly displayed during the first week of school. Scenes continue to be added and the play as a whole is now so long that its presentation always means a selection of scenes from the whole. Bit by bit costumes and properties have been made and collected, among them a most amazing tombstone for Mrs. Sawyer in which the boys take particular pride. The ingenuity and care expended upon the production of this Tom Sawyer play seems to have had a steadying effect upon the behavior of the group, for from their eminence as "one of the hardest sections to manage," they are coming to have a reputation for efficiency in the performance of their duties as members of the safety squad. The teachers of literature feel that the desire of the group to create something of their own and the success with which that wish has been realized has been a factor in the improvement of conduct.

Creative reading must be free. That is, children should enjoy the privilege of making their own choices among books of varied types. Here the teacher's part in

the enterprise is to make good books look inviting. On a set of open shelves in each room are arranged thirty or forty books with plenty of space, for children dislike the appearance of crowded shelves. The books are grouped by means of attractively lettered captions that indicate the types of books assembled: "Poetry and Rhymes," "Old Folk Tales," "Modern Fairy Tales," "Ballads and Ballad Stories," "Books about Boys and Girls" are typical classifications. Now and then there is a special group arranged for the sake of arousing interest in particular books. Thus a caption which read "Some Fantastic Journeys," introduced *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*, *THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS*, *THE GOLDEN FLEECE*, *THE TRAVELS OF BARON MÜNCHHAUSEN* and *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND*. Here it may be of interest in passing to mention that *THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS* has never lacked for readers since the day a little girl fresh from a first reading of the books exclaimed, "It's a special kind of fairy tale."

In selecting books for free reading we take great pains to assemble attractive and often beautiful editions and to avoid so far as possible editions with text-book format. A simple shelf-list is provided, which not only makes it possible for the boys and girls to keep the books in order, a task that affords them pleasure, but gives them opportunity for the kind of familiarity with books that comes from handling them. Certain types of books are conspicuous by their absence, among them series books, purely informational and reference books. The school library and the science rooms make adequate provision for research problems and informational reading, so that the literature rooms keep to the strictly literary aspects of children's reading interests. Headings such as "Books for Boys" or "Books for Girls" are never used because designations of this type tend to encourage limitations in the matter of choice.

Needless to say in this scheme of things

there is no place for the intrusion of any unnatural system of reading for points or burdening books with weights. What is it that makes some books more valuable than others? Who can determine relative values for all readers? Why impose an artificial scale of literary values? These questions have been discussed many times by the teachers interested in this experiment and the conclusion holds with them, points and weights do not belong in the teaching of literature. In the meantime the children are so eager to explore the bookshelves for themselves, so spontaneous in their comments about books that we have never had any reason for introducing them to pedagogical evaluations of gains and losses. It follows also that we do not have book reports of a conventional sort. In fact we do not use the phrase. Delightful conversations about books and reading occur nearly every day, for the boys and girls are always making discoveries concerning books about which they are eager to talk with genuine expression of opinion and a fine spontaneity.

Although routine methods of check-up and appraisal are avoided in this work the children keep a record of their reading experiences by the simple scheme of listing now and then the books they would recommend to other readers. Here there is just a single rule: the books listed must have been read in their entirety. That the children observe this regulation quite scrupulously appears from statements like this: "I like this but I can't put it on the list because I haven't finished it," or "When I am through with this I am going to put it on the list." Two attractive looking charts are available for the purpose of making these recommendations. One is called "Books We Recommend" and the other "Poems We Like." There is a column for every section on each one of the charts. A pupil writes his name, his age, and the title of his selection. The poem chart came

into existence chiefly because the children usually know their favorite poems as individual selections rather than by books. Last year the ten most widely read books in the B6 were as follows: THE SAMPO, THE STORY OF ROLAND, THE OLD TOBACCO SHOP, Andersen's FAIRY TALES, THIS SINGING WORLD, ON TO OREGON, THE MERRY ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD, DOWNRIGHT DENCEY, SONGS OF INNOCENCE, and TREASURE ISLAND.

This experimental study is now in its third year and it bids fair to continue for an indefinite period. Careful and detailed records have been kept of the progress made by the children, of the growth in their taste, of their varied creative activities, of the materials used, and of the methods developed. Let me say quite plainly this experiment in building a course of study in elementary English is neither a methodless procedure nor an attempt to abandon method. Rather it represents a thoughtful search for better methods, for ways of satisfying that love of the wonderful that is in all children. The teachers who are responsible for planning and guiding the work believe earnestly that there is a right way of helping children to enjoy literature, but they are rigorously opposed to the use of the tricks, the devices, and the formulas which too often pass for method and obscure the path towards a genuinely scientific procedure. A method at its best is an approach and a real approach means first-hand experience, reality. And that is what literature should mean to children—that direct vision of life which is the poet's way. There is no intimacy with books in later life that is like that whole-hearted living in them that comes with the first reading discoveries. Something happens to one then that does not happen again,—something lasting and inescapable. It is then, if ever, that we read literature in the spirit of its making, which is creative reading.

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# "Cautionary" Stories for Children\*

CONRAD T. LOGAN

*Professor of English, State Teachers College, Harrisonburg, Virginia*

IN 1807 there was published in London one of a long line of volumes designed to set straight those frivolous children who in spite of their elder's advice *would* look gaily on the "problems of life." A copy of this little book, *THE DAISY*, was on display in the famous collection owned by Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach and exhibited at the New York Public Library a few years ago. It is sub-titled "Cautionary Stories in Verse Adapted to the Ideas of Children from Four to Eight Years Old." Here, for example, is one of the "cautionary" stories:

## THE GIDDY GIRL

Miss Helen was always too giddy to heed  
What her mother had told her to shun;  
For frequently, over the street in full speed,  
She would cross where the carriages run.

And out she would go, to a very deep well,  
To look at the water below;  
How naughty! to run to a dangerous well,  
Where her mother forbade her to go!

One morning, intending to take but a peep,  
Her foot slipped away from the ground;  
Unhappy misfortune! The water was deep  
And giddy Miss Helen was drown'd.

Elizabeth Turner, the author of these lines, holds to the tone of the good Dr. Watt in her rimed preachments: when pretty Jack "ran to play too far from home" without asking, he was lost and had to earn his own living as a chimney sweep; when little Miss Sophia was not deterred by a closed garden gate, she fell and proved that "little girls should never climb"; when

Jane and Tom tasted of unapproved red berries, they died:

Alas! had Tommy understood  
That fruit in lanes is seldom good,  
He might have walked with little Jane  
Again along the shady lane.

This admonitory trend in books for children was by no means a new note when the quaint Miss Turner sounded it, nor has the theme yet departed from children's literature. Of course, a great prototype of this sort of writing was the famous *HISTORY OF SANDFORD AND MERTON*, first published in 1793 and re-issued in many editions through the following century. Thomas Day, its author, must have been a charmingly quixotic person. Of him Miss Barry writes in *A CENTURY OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS*: "Mr. Day lived, as he wrote, to prove his theories, and whenever the unknown quantity of human nature thwarted him, went back to them with unshaken confidence. A great part of his life was given to works of active benevolence, and his death was no less consistent than his life; for he died in trying to prove that a young horse could be tamed by kindness." It was this same abiding faith in theory which led Thomas Day to draw so impossible a Good Boy as the one he named Harry Sandford.

Punishment came hot footed after an evil deed in most of the stories that were written in the early nineteenth century. Perhaps an interesting example of this can be seen in the *PLEASING AND INSTRUCTIVE STORIES FOR YOUNG CHILDREN* by Mrs. Hughes, published in Philadelphia in 1838.

\*This article is one of a series prepared by members of the Committee on Elementary School English of the National Council of Teachers of English.

"Come to mamma, Emily," Mrs. Hughs begins. "She will take you upon her lap, and tell you a pretty story. You like to hear pretty stories, I am sure; yes, I know you do.

"I must tell you about a good little girl, you say; very well, I will. I like to talk about good little girls, for I love good girls, and so do all good people."

After such a sugary beginning we need not be surprised if the author's instruction should have a sentimental tinge.

"When sheep are young they are called lambs, and their flesh is called lamb. It is a pity little things so pretty as lambs should be killed; but, if they were not, there would soon be too many of them to get food; besides, we should not have enough meat without them, and their short life is a happy one."

Little Emily learns that crying is futile, that if she is given scissors she must not cut off her hair, that gluttony is a sin ("I hope Emily will never do so naughty a thing as to eat till she is ill, for mamma would be sadly ashamed of her little girl if she did"), that the little boy who tormented flies suffered the inevitable fate—"A great bull came running up to him, and caught him by its horns, and tossed him over its head." Tossed and retossed, with arms broken and body bruised, the little boy had to give ear to this advice from his rescuers:

"Perhaps you will learn now to feel for the poor little insects when you see them creeping about without wings. You were just as cruel to them as the bull was to you, and it was a much greater fault in you, than in it; for the bull did not know any better, but you were able to understand that you were giving pain."

And here finally is a "pleasing and instructive story" of what comes of childish ill humor:

"I think I heard a little girl scream just now as if she were in a violent passion! Oh! I hope it was not my little Emily

who could be so naughty. Emily will grieve her mamma very much if she behave so ill. People will be afraid to come near her, lest she should scratch or bite, for they will think she is a little mad girl.

"If I see her again in such a humour, I think I shall have to tie her to the table, with her hands behind her back, for I shall be afraid lest she should scratch her little brother's eyes out, or tear his hair off his head.

"If Emily loves her mamma, she will take care never to behave so again, for mamma cannot love little girls who get into such humours.

"I will tell Emily a story about a little boy whom I once knew; he was a very naughty little boy, and used often to get into such passions as Emily was in just now; and one day he was playing with his little brother, who did something to vex him; what did this little mad boy do, but run to the table to catch up an iron that the servant had been using, to throw at his brother.

"The iron was very hot, so that when he caught hold of it, it burnt his hand so much, that all the skin came off to his finger's end; and he had so much pain that he did not know what to do with himself. Now, though this little boy did not like to feel pain, he had been very willing to give it to his brother, and it was only what he deserved when it all fell upon himself.

"And it almost always does; for, when people allow themselves to get into so great a passion, they do not know what they are doing, and are as likely to do themselves harm as any other person. So I hope this is the last time that I shall ever see Emily in a bad humour."

May I offer two title pages as observed in the Rosenbach exhibit? Both may "point a moral and adorn a tale" just here:

VIRTUE AND VICE, or the History of Charles Careful and Harry Heedless, Shewing the Good Effects of Caution and Prudence, and the Many Inconveniences that Harry Heedless experienced from his rashness and Disobedience, while Master Careful became a great man, only by his Merit. Boston: Printed and sold by Samuel Hall, No. 53, Cornhill, 1795.

THE REPROBATE'S REWARD, or a Looking-Glass for Disobedient Children Being a full and true Account of the barbarous

(Continued on page 133)

# An Exchange of Letters\*

NELLE WREN AYRES and INEZ A. BUCHANAN

*Training School*

and

CARRIE BELLE PARKS

*English Department*

*State Teachers College, Indiana, Pennsylvania*

LOOKING back to their own experiences for composition material, the first-year English classes became interested in reminiscences of activities they had liked best as children. Then came the inspiration—why not write to children in the Training School to see what they like to do today? Miss Buchanan and Miss Ayres, fourth and sixth-grade critics, willingly adopted the idea and planned letter-writing as their next language unit. Copies of names and addresses of the grade children were secured and apportioned among the college students, who were to write the first letters.

The college students worked valiantly, eager to produce letters full of interesting concrete detail and free from mechanical errors. They used the block form of heading to make it easier for children to follow in their replies and were especially careful about clear penmanship, since Miss Buchanan sent word that fourth-grade children found some handwriting very difficult to read. Those who wished to do so, illustrated their letters, but not before the content had already been made as interesting as possible. The letters were read aloud, criticized, revised, carefully copied, and sent through the mail to the children, who after some study of letter-writing problems, sent back replies. A second exchange will be fostered by the teachers,

and then the correspondence will be left to take care of itself. It is also hoped that a meeting can be arranged between the children and college students.

The experiment has been of value in a number of ways. First of all, the college students, who initiated the undertaking, profited by:

The use of actual experience as a subject for composition:

A letter-writing situation so out of the ordinary as to capture the class interest;

Subject-matter interesting in itself and later enhanced by illustration; (this was made possible because no mention was made of illustrating until the subject-matter was completed);

Actual contact with children's interests;

Increased respect for children's ability;

Correlation between Training-School and College;

A reader situation that brought out pride and care in preparation of manuscript;

Eventually a real acquaintance with a child.

The college students profited not only by the undertaking as such, but their reactions to the experiment were definitely beneficial. In the first place, they recognized the problem of making their letters interesting to

\*This article is one of a series prepared by members of the Committee on Elementary School English of the National Council of Teachers of English.



children and using a vocabulary suitable to children's understanding. They gained an impression of the well-chosen, extensive vocabulary of the children, and some recognition of children's ability in handling long or complex sentences. Finally, a realization of the broadening influence of the children's experiences and contacts in travel, reading, music, and art, was brought home to the students.

The benefits of this project were not, of course, confined to the college students. There was a great stir in the fourth grade of the Training School when the letters arrived. "My letter came this morning!" "I got a letter, too!" "My letter has pictures drawn in it!" These were the happy expressions which greeted the teacher the day after the children received their letters.

After the excitement of receiving the letters was over, a high degree of interest was maintained until all the letters had been read aloud to the group. This gave a splendid audience situation for oral reading.

Almost immediately the children wished to answer the letters. The college students gave children a lead for this in asking them if they were interested in climbing trees, playing house, or making a store. One little eight-year-old asked, "Couldn't we tell them something we liked to do when we were young?"

A real letter-writing situation existed, so with little effort the children studied and mastered the letter form. The greatest difficulty arose when they attempted to write the body of the letter. They had so many interesting experiences to tell their new friends that they became careless in sentence writing. For this reason, it seemed advisable to spend some time reading sentences and short stories, punctuating paragraphs and giving oral reports in order to develop a better sentence consciousness. This was time profitably spent, and a second attempt to write the body of a letter showed decided improvement. Even before the letters were mailed the children were wondering when they would receive an answer.

The letter project not only stimulated interest in audience reading but also provided a real letter writing situation. It proved to the children that both oral and written composition could be made interesting, exciting and entertaining.

The sixth grade was every whit as delighted as the fourth. The arrival of a letter from a college student was an event in the life of each sixth grader. Interest and enthusiasm were evident from the moment the first letter was read. Some of these letters were read aloud; all were posted on the bulletin boards.

The group discussions in the rest periods which followed gave the inspiration for the language periods. Some of the comments overheard were: "How neat." "They use the same form we do." "That is good printing." "May we illustrate our letters?" "Those are interesting." "Each wrote about one thing he liked to do." "They are good spellers." It seemed that their comments touched the vital points in letter writing.

During the intervening days, many spent leisure moments in making pencil sketches, in manuscript writing, in further examination of the college students' letters and planning the contents of the letters they were soon to write, in reply.

The day for answering the letters came at last. Anticipation had increased the enthusiasm. A number told briefly why the letters had been such a pleasure. The hour given to the language class brought an atmosphere all its own. An unusually high degree of interest was maintained to the end.

Among the worth while outcomes of this project, as regards the Training School pupils, were the following:

Pleasure and interest were shown in letter-writing because it grew out of a real situation.

There was a realization that a friendly letter can be made distinctive by choosing the incident wisely, and writing about it vividly and in detail. This led to an

appreciation of the fact that it is necessary to add many descriptive words to the vocabulary.

The pupils gained a recognition of the correct form and position of the parts of a letter, and of the accepted form of folding a letter.

"Spelling consciousness" was thoroughly aroused.

Intelligent self criticism and class criticism resulted.

### *Sample Letters and Corresponding Replies*

848 Wayne Ave.  
Indiana, Penna.  
February 17, 1930

Dear Jeanne,

Would you like to write and tell me some of the things you like to do best when you play? I would like to know if I used to play the same way you do.

When I was small, I liked to make mud pies. My sister and I always had a lot of fun in that way. Our mud pies seemed to be different from those of the other children. We would make them out of dirt and water just as the other children would, and then we would put them in lids of Mason jars. The difference came in when mother gave us old pieces of soap-dye and a pan of water. With these conveniences we would make colored soap-suds which we would put on the top of the mud pies. When that was done, we would set them in the sun to bake. After they were baked hard, we would have chocolate cakes with pink, blue, or green vague colored icing. To get rid of our cakes we would sell them in a store along with various other objects such as tall grass for corn, seeds for tea, and large leaves for meat. The money our customers used was pretty stones. In this way we spent many a happy morning.

Sometime, when you don't know what to do, ask your mother for some soap-dye and try it. You will have lots of fun.

Your friend,

Ruth Britton

Fourth Grade  
Wilson Hall  
February 27, 1930

Dear Miss Britton

I was very pleased to get your letter. Now I will tell you some of the things I do. One Christmas I got a pretty doll with a pink silk dress and hat on. With it I got a trunk full of dresses for it. One afternoon I was outside playing with

my doll and mother called me in to supper. I forgot the doll was out there and I went to bed. The next morning I got dressed and went down for breakfast. I started off to school. But just as I got on the porch I saw my doll. It had rained that night and she and her dresses were ruined. It taught me a lesson. This Christmas I got a big doll with long golden curls, and a pink dress and hair ribbons. I am going to take good care of this doll.

Sincerely yours,

Virginia Hill

11

484 John Sutton Hall  
State Teachers College  
Indiana, Pennsylvania  
February 10, 1930

Dear Peter:

You must have a good time playing with your playmates and pets. I can remember the wonderful times I had.

Very vividly I can remember challenging my playmate to enter her fox-terrier puppy in a battle with my full-grown bloodhound. Of course the fight never took place as our mothers overheard the conversation and shamed both of us for being so cruel to a poor little puppy.

I rejoiced just as much to think my dog would have won whether the victory had been over a rat-terrier or a St. Bernard.

Things you do are just as interesting I am sure, and I would just love to know some of them.

A friend,

Esther McAfee

912 Wayne Ave.  
Indiana, Pa.  
March 5, 1930

Dear Esther,

It is quite interesting and very humorous to answer a letter written by a person unknown to me. I find it a very interesting hobby to play with pets but it does not attract me as my favorite sport. Give me freedom to go out for a day with my bicycle and ride to some pleasant spot and play in a brook catching crabs or swimming.

Once while on one of these particular occasions we were hunting for snakes. One boy about my age was poking in a hole while another boy and I had stones in our hands so as to kill the serpent. It was in the summer and we were in our bare legs. All at once the grass behind us moved. Then there was a sudden jump. The object hit my legs and was so frightened that he leaped blindly and hit my friend's legs. We saw the object leap into the water and we found that he was a green frog. That ended our snake hunting adventures. Have you ever had any adventures similar to mine?

Sincerely,

Peter Zavlaris

# Work Reading in the Intermediate Grades

WILLIAM A. KING

Principal, B. F. Day School, Seattle, Washington

THIS treatment of work reading is chiefly interpretative. The first four sections are intended primarily as an introduction to a course of study in work reading. Much of the material is adapted from tentative reading bulletins<sup>1</sup> prepared for use in the Seattle public schools.

## I. DEFINITION

Work reading is essentially study reading. It is characterized by the work attitude, although this idea should not be imposed upon boys and girls so as to suggest labor or an unpleasant task. It is prompted and sustained by a definite purpose in the mind of the reader.

Work reading includes a number of specific techniques. Some of these, such as reading to answer questions, following directions, finding main points and supporting details, are applicable to a wide range of materials in the content subjects. Others, due to the mode of thinking involved, to the organization or style of presentation, are peculiar to a given subject. For instance, reading certain types of maps or graphs or for causal relationships is done with materials from history; reading to find the essential conditions of a problem in arithmetic requires an ability peculiar to that subject.

Work reading includes preparation for effective audience reading. There are numerous situations in the intermediate grades which require this preparation.

## II. SELECTION OF MATERIALS

This section deals mainly with training

situations. It should suggest to the teacher the necessity of evaluating methods and materials in the light of the standards here set forth.

### A. *Materials adapted to the purpose of the exercise*

The attainment of a specific technique is more readily achieved through the use of appropriate materials. For example,

1. In developing the ability to read to answer questions the teacher should begin with simple factual material.
2. In developing the ability to outline, selections should be such that main points, or main points and supporting details may be easily recognized.
3. In developing the ability to phrase correctly in audience reading the teacher and pupils should use materials that facilitate the flow or rhythm of oral reading.

### B. *Materials of proper difficulty*

The vocabulary of a selection is an important factor in determining how thoroughly it may be understood by the reader. Common carrier words cause little difficulty, but the presence of many unfamiliar words, especially technical terms, interferes with comprehension. The aim should be to select material containing worthwhile information given in a simple manner. The vocabulary should be within the child's comprehension. The sentence structure should be simple.

### C. *Materials interesting and attractive*

Since the constant aim is for thoughtful reading, it is desirable that work reading should be based on materials rich in content and within the child's power to ap-

<sup>1</sup>Indebtedness is hereby expressed to the other members of the Seattle reading committee who have cooperated in the work of curriculum revision.



preciate. Most of the material will be chiefly informational, although well organized, intensely interesting literary selections are suitable.

Attractiveness as to mechanical details—table of contents, index, study helps, quality and size of print, paging is significant. The use of suitable illustrations, maps, charts, graphs and diagrams is particularly desirable.

### III. APPLICATION TO CONTENT SUBJECTS

The content subjects—history, geography, science, hygiene—involve the extensive use of work, or study reading techniques. Some of the most commonly used techniques are reading to answer questions, to find main points, to collect supplementary material, to summarize. There is economy of time and effort in having foundational work in these skills developed during work reading periods by the reading teacher. However, further guidance in the intelligent application of the various abilities, in helping pupils with the thinking processes while they are studying, belongs to the teachers of the content subjects.

As explained in the definition (Section I), some techniques are applicable only to certain situations. As Dr. William S. Gray explains, there are "modes of thinking" that characterize good work in a given subject. Skill in using the required techniques and appreciation of the modes of thinking will be most profitably developed in connection with these situations. For instance, with respect to technique in arithmetic, reading to find the essential conditions of a problem, regardless of the numbers involved, is peculiar to that subject and should be developed as a phase of that subject by the teacher of arithmetic. Reading for causal relationships characterizes much of the reading in history. This "mode of thinking" is gradually identified in the mind of the learner, thus increasing his skill in dealing with the materials of this subject.

In directing the study of content

materials the classroom teacher should keep in mind these questions:

What techniques are required in this situation?

Are the pupils showing growth in the use of these techniques?

Are the pupils showing growth in appreciation of the modes of thinking peculiar to this subject?

### IV. DESIRABLE CONCOMITANTS

A progressive program of work reading includes not only the development of specific techniques. It is equally concerned with interests and attitudes which are being developed at the same time. To the extent that the teacher keeps in mind reading in its broad sense, to that extent pupils who are learning to use books, newspapers, magazines as sources of information will become increasingly and actively interested in them.

Some of the more easily recognized outcomes are:

Appreciation of well organized books and other materials.

Interest in the evolution of the book.

A sense of responsibility for the care of books.

"A sense of the advantages that accrue in locating material quickly and accurately.

"A consciousness of the numerous sources of information.

"Appreciation of the need for increasing one's vocabulary.

"An appreciation of the library as an organized collection or store of information.

"The habit of suspending judgment and withholding conclusions until sufficient data have been examined.

"Courteous appreciation in the face of challenged statements or viewpoints."<sup>2</sup>

As the teacher works with the pupils, opportunities for the development of other desirable attitudes and interests will arise. These she must recognize and use in order to create abiding reading interests and broadening tastes.

### V. WORK READING TECHNIQUES

In recent years, series of very helpful

work or study readers have become available for classroom use. The books of at least one or two of these series, suitable for use in the intermediate grades, should be provided for all teachers who are responsible for reading instruction at this level. The best of these books contain well organized materials for use in developing most of the study processes in which the intermediate grade pupil should become proficient.

The following outline suggests some of the desirable specific abilities in work reading:

#### Grade Four

- a. Reading to answer questions
- b. Following simple directions
- c. Selecting main points
- d. Reading to solve simple problems
- e. Summarizing

#### Grade Five

- a. Additional power in each of the abilities listed for grade four with materials at fifth grade level
- b. Selecting main points and supporting details
- c. Collecting supplementary material and comparing this with original material

#### Grade Six

- a. Increase in power in each of the abilities listed for grades four and five
- b. Outlining of main and subordinate topics
- c. Scanning
- d. Reading to draw inferences

There is still another more general consideration of work reading situations which the teacher should keep in mind. It is plainly suggested in the following outline:

1. Locating materials
2. Selecting and evaluating materials and meanings
3. Organizing materials and meanings
4. Retention

This outline suggests the order of pro-

cedure in a typical situation. For example, the pupil has been assigned a topic in one of the content subjects on which he is to prepare a report.

First, he consults suitable sources of information in an effort to *locate* materials he can use.

Second, he *selects* and *evaluates* the pertinent materials.

Third, he *organizes* the pertinent material so as to adapt it to his immediate use. This process may involve selection of main points and supporting details, outlining, note taking, summarizing.

Fourth, he *retains* meanings for the required presentation and possibly for future reference.

This outline of work reading techniques suggests the availability of an abundance of varied reading materials in the school. These materials—encyclopedias, reference and supplementary books, magazines, pamphlets, clippings, pictures—should be assembled and distributed in such a way as to make them readily accessible to all who can use them profitably. Need it be stated that this implies the presence of the centralized, well organized library in the elementary school?

### VI. WORK READING ACTIVITIES

#### A. Development of study processes

In developing work reading techniques or study processes the consideration of a suitable procedure at once confronts the teacher. A suggestive procedure is here given:

1. Preliminary testing to determine needs of the class and of individuals
2. Analysis of the study process into its minor phases. For instance, *Reading to Answer Questions* involves the following:
  - a. Reading of the question
  - b. Interpretation of the question
  - c. Selecting and rejecting data in terms of the question
  - d. Final selection of the pertinent material, and when necessary, the organization of that material
3. Developing these phases according to

<sup>2</sup>King, William A., *THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929, page 197.

the needs of the pupils as shown by the preliminary tests

4. Testing to ascertain degree of mastery
5. Re-teaching and re-testing as found necessary

In treating work reading activities frequently required in the school library, the author, in a book<sup>3</sup> recently published, included some processes that may well be presented here:

### 1. Selecting main ideas

- a. Work from the whole paragraph or selection to its parts—"key" words and sentences.
- b. Read the whole selection rapidly, marking the most important sentences
- c. In a series of running paragraphs,
  - (1) Make and match suitable titles
  - (2) Find the word or words of greatest significance in each paragraph
  - (3) From several suggested titles, select the best one for the story
  - (4) Find the most important paragraph in the series.

### 2. Outlining

- a. Match outline and selection from which it has been developed, reading parts of the selection to prove various topics in the outline.
- b. Complete an outline by supplying the missing sub-topics.
- c. Consider two selections, one of which is easily outlined, the other with difficulty. What makes this difference?
- d. The main topics of the outline of a new selection are disarranged. Read the selection and arrange the topics in logical order.
- e. As in reading for main ideas, which is a similar process, mark key sentences or thoughts during the first rapid reading of the selection.

### 3. Skimming

Rapid reading and abundant materials happily combine to place a

premium upon skimming, a process which is viewed with apprehension by some. The reader should not be permitted to confuse skimming with hurried, careless, superficial reading. He should have a purpose, should be searching for definite information when engaged in skimming. Without training in this phase, the pupil who has to gather and evaluate materials from various sources is seriously handicapped in a well-stocked library. He must learn to select what he wants from a number of sources without reading irrelevant materials. A careful check-up on actual comprehension, following such exercises, will show how effectively the skimming was done.

Poor readers, slow in word and phrase recognition, cannot rise adequately to this kind of reading. Rapid but careless readers should be required to account for their findings.

The above presentation may prove suggestive to the teacher or a group of interested teachers in dealing with other study processes such as summarizing, solving simple problems, reading to draw inferences, taking notes.

### B. Classroom assignments in work reading

Successful teaching of the content subjects implies skillful direction of the reading activities involved. Necessarily, the quality of work accomplished depends largely upon the nature and variety of reading assignments developed by the teacher, or by the teacher and pupils together.

Following are a few typical assignments<sup>4</sup> in geography, science, and arithmetic. They suggest the value of setting up definite purposes as the correct approach in work or study reading situations.

#### 1. Grade Four

- a. To get main points.

HOW WE ARE CLOTHED. Page 15.  
Read each paragraph through carefully. Choose five paragraphs that tell you something of real

<sup>3</sup>Op. cit., pages 201-203.

<sup>4</sup>Gist and King. THE TEACHING AND SUPERVISION OF READING. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927. Chapter VIII.



interest. As a test for the other members of the class ask one good question on each of the paragraphs selected by you.

- b. To find materials relating to a given problem.

Use of magazines—"A moth had issued from its cocoon, and interest was high").

Distribute the *Nature Magazines*. (We have three years' complete sets.) Find any picture or article that will help us to understand moths or their habits. If you find something particularly interesting, leave the magazine open at that page and be ready to report to the class tomorrow.

- c. To answer questions.

HOW WE TRAVEL.

Children, you are going to read about the home of a little boy in Spain. You will want to find out what his father has done to provide for his future living, how they care for the trees, what is done with the olives, and how olive oil is made.

## 2. Grade Five

- a. To get main points.

"Queer Customs of Topsy-Turvy Land," Carpenter's *ASIA*, page 197.

Read this article carefully through once. When you have

done this close your book and write down facts which you might use as an outline in giving your report. When you have finished, quickly glance over your story and make note of any main points which you have omitted, or correct any mistakes in facts which you have made in your first outline. Those finishing their outline sooner than others, make a list of things which you remember in your reading which are "topsy-turvy" to use. See who can tell the greatest number to the class.

- b. To understand problems in arithmetic.

Take a sheet of paper and head it for reading. Turn to page 21 of your arithmetic. You will find some incomplete problems. Read each problem carefully to find what facts are given. You will find that no questions are asked. Supply a question for each problem, numbering the questions as the problems are numbered in the book.

Obviously, the teacher of content subjects should be a good teacher of work reading, thus leading the children to become habitual in applying the required technique or study process in a given situation.

## "CAUTIONARY" STORIES FOR CHILDREN

(Continued from page 125)

and bloody Murder of one Elizabeth Wood, living in the city of Cork, by her own Son, as she was riding upon the 26th day of July, to Kings gate Market. How he cut her throat from ear to ear; as also how the murder was found out by her apparition or ghost; the manner of his being taken; his dying words at the place of execution; with a true copy of verses written in his own hand in **Cork jail**, being a warning to all disobedient Children to repent, and obey their Parents. Philadelphia, 1798.

I believe it was Jane Taylor who somewhere observed

To find a moral when there's none  
Is hard indeed—yet must be done.

But the necessity of moralizing was not the only characteristic of early nineteenth century writers. They also felt with the author of *THE DAISY* that material must be "adapted to the ideas of children"; this

no doubt accounts for the condescending tone which so often crept unconsciously into children's stories of this period. No doubt, too, this explains why so many stories written for children have been quickly forgotten, while adult writing, pro-

vided it possess a glowing truth, an innate simplicity, has been appropriated as children's very own. Witness, for example, such adult books as GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, PILGRIM'S PROGRESS, and ROBINSON CRUSOE.

## THE LANGUAGE APPROACH TO READING

(Continued from page 116)

clearly the little or no improvement in eye-movements as one goes from grade five to seven to nine.

TABLE I  
AVERAGE NUMBER OF FIXATIONS PER LINE  
IN SILENT READING

Grade V .....	6.9
Grade VI .....	7.3
Grade VII .....	6.8
H. S. Freshmen .....	7.2
H. S. Sophomores .....	5.8

TABLE II  
AVERAGE DURATION OF FIXATIONS  
IN SILENT READING

Grade V .....	6.3
Grade VI .....	5.9
Grade VII .....	6.0
H. S. Freshmen .....	6.1
H. S. Sophomores .....	6.2

TABLE III  
AVERAGE NUMBER OF REGRESSIVE MOVEMENTS  
PER LINE IN SILENT READING

Grade V .....	1.3
Grade VI .....	1.6
Grade VII .....	1.5
H. S. Freshmen .....	1.0
H. S. Sophomores .....	0.7

Yet Russell's data would show that through regular progress in visual language training pupils not only overtake their aural ability to understand thought material but surpass it despite the fact that the second is sooner developed and exceeds the first in the fifth grade after eye-movements are barely amenable to training.

Erickson and King<sup>a</sup> carried on a similar experiment for the same purpose as Russell's, but their findings like his are of interest here. Since they had only 106 cases in all distributed over seven grades (three to nine) their conclusions for each grade level cannot be trusted. However "individual records show that pupils tend to retain about the same relative rank in their various groups whichever method is employed." This fact would seem to show that efficiency in one certain type of language activity involving eye-movements correlates very highly with efficiency in another similar type of language activity where eye-movements are totally absent, and would indicate again that perhaps eye-movements in and of themselves are not terribly disturbing factors.

Much remains to be done before it can be concluded—if ever—that ineffective eye-movements are solely a result of language difficulties. The writer is at present engaged in the experimental task of finding out the relative importance of the eye-movement factor and the factor of language proficiency in reading.

<sup>a</sup>Erickson, C. I. and King, I., "A Comparison of Visual and Oral Presentation of Lessons in the Case of Pupils from the Third to the Ninth Grades," *School and Society* VI (August 4, 1917), pp. 146-148.

## Editorials

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### **The Real Significance of Children's Interests**

**M**ISCONCEPTIONS of what is meant by *children's interests* defeat many a well-meaning teacher. The real significance of children's interests in the schoolroom is more implicit than explicit. If, in the phrase *children's interests* is implied such educational factors as spontaneity, zealous attention, creative imagination, and curiosity, then surely there is reason to encourage children along the lines of their normal interests.

By encouragement, pampering is not meant. A sympathetic attitude toward children's interests does not mean letting children do as they please, when they please. It is not a matter of letting the child do *what* he wants to, so much as it is letting him do *as* he wants to. The child must not only be allowed to do what he is interested in doing, but to do it with such wholeheartedness and zest as to unify all of his powers for the time being.

There is a vital difference between the point of view of the adult and that of the child in the allurements of new knowledge. To the child, knowledge is not an end in itself, but a body of related experience. He enjoys vastly the quest of it when he goes for it in the spirit of adventure. The adult is forever revisiting the traditional scenes

of the human mind. Not so the child; the child comes upon each new scene as the originator or discoverer. His rights are those of the explorer, his spirit that of adventure. First upon the scene, he lets fly the flag of his own individuality. All of the world may know about it, but to him alone belongs this moment of personal first achievement or realization. He takes possession, if at all, in the name of his own experience. There is the freshness of surprise that such a thing should be. He is a romancer as well as an observer, and must climb his peak in Darien and view the scene with hand raised to shade his eyes from the brilliantly new. However much a realist he may be in some things, he is not literal and matter of fact in the acquisition of new knowledge.

This is but one example of the distinction that the teacher must draw between children's interests and those of adults. But in every instance, meaningful experience is the basis of learning for the child, and children's interests point in that direction.

There is a wide difference between the teacher who recognizes that children's interests must be nurtured for growth of the right kind, and the teacher who makes a kind of free-lance of the child in the schoolroom. The one understands the child, and is a true mentor; the other neither understands the child, nor teaches.

## Reviews and Abstracts

THE ADVENTURES OF JOHNNY APPLESEED. By Henry Chapin. Illustrations by James Daugherty. Coward-McCann, 1930.

This book takes high rank in design and typography, but such excellence in physical make-up does not atone for its editorial shortcomings. There is evident enthusiasm of the author for his subject, in fact, too evident, for he is allowed too great editorial freedom. His narrative is not without possibilities of interest to juvenile readers, but much editing of the original copy was needed to bring about the right balance between descriptive detail and action. This editing seems not to have been done.

The narrative has moved through 106 of its 244 pages before old Hartwick with his buckskin bag filled with apple seed, gives Johnny his mission in life. The pace is too slow. There is more than one indication that the author saw above the heads of children. The incident of Johnny's meeting with Sal is an example. Considerable maturity of comprehension is assumed in the selection of such glimpses of pioneer life.

C. C. C.

A FAIRY TO STAY. By Margaret Beatrice Lodge. Illustrated by A. H. Watson. Oxford University Press, 1929.

Pamela certainly needed the help of a fairy, what with Aunt Isabella and Aunt Florence disapproving of the White House school and the Brownies and, indeed, of almost everything that little girls find pleasant. The fairy's effort to reform the aunts, however, was successful, and young readers of the story will be delighted at the outcome.

The setting of the story is English, but aunts like Pamela's are not foreign to America, while Pamela herself is a dear little girl who can readily be loved by American children.

The illustrations are delicate, and well adapted to the story. This book will probably appeal to little girls eight or nine years old. It is to be particularly commended for its gentleness and mannerliness—qualities frequently sacrificed to thrills and excitement in children's stories.

J. L. C.

### STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912,

Of *The Elementary English Review* published monthly except July and August, at Detroit, Michigan, for April 1, 1930.

State of Michigan } ss.  
County of Wayne }

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared C. C. Certain, who having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the publisher of the *Elementary English Review*, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, C. C. Certain, Detroit, Michigan; Editor, C. C. Certain, Detroit, Michigan.

2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given). C. C. Certain, Detroit, Michigan.

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C. C. CERTAIN, Editor.

ALFRED S. CUDLIP.

(My commission expires February 4, 1933.)

Sworn to and subscribed before me this thirty-first day of March, 1930.

(Seal)